

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8786

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE TEGUCIGALPA 5241

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, HO

SUBJECT: EXPULSION OF ROLANDO MERUELO BY GOH

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 4034, 5066, 5075

1. THE LONG PRESS CAMPAIGN (SEE REFTELS) AGAINST ROLANDO MERUELO, CUBAN ADVISOR TO THE SAN PEDRO SULA NEWSPAPERS LA NOTICIA AND LA PRENSA, FINALLY HAD ITS EFFECT ON DECEMBER 6 WHEN MERUELO LEFT SAN PEDRO SULA FOR THE U.S. APPARENTLY, THE PRESSURE FROM LABOR AND CAMPESINO GROUPS AND THE STRONG CAMPAIGN WAGED BY EL CRONISTA RESULTED IN MINGOV COL. MELGAR CASTRO'S INSTRUCTING MERUELO TO LEAVE. THE CAMPAIGN HAD ACCUSED THE CUBAN OF INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL HONDURAN AFFAIRS THROUGH HIS INFLUENCE ON THE POLICY OF THE TWO NEWSPAPERS. ALSO HIS HIGH SALARY (REPORTEDLY US\$2,500. PER MONTH) HAD ANGERED SOME HONDURANS.

2. IN HIS FAREWELL STATEMENT, PUBLISHED BY LA PRENSA ON DECEMBER 6, MERUELO RECOUNTED HIS FIGHT AGAINST CASTRO IN CUBA AND SAID THAT HONDURAS WAS IN DANGER OF FALLING UNDER THE YOKE OF COMMUNISM. HE EXPRESSED GREAT AFFECTION FOR HONDURAS AND ITS PEOPLE AND SWORE THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS ON THE COUNTRY'S BEHALF.

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3. LA PRENSA'S ACCOMPANYING COMMENTS SAID THAT MERUELO WAS THE VICTIM OF A SLANDER CAMPAIGN ORCHESTRATED BY CERTAIN OFFICIALS AND DIRECTED BY THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF HONDURAS, WHICH HAS INFILTRATED THE COUNTRY'S UNION AND CAMPESINO ORGANIZATIONS. LA PRENSA EXPRESSED THE VIEW MERUELO'S EXILE FROM HONDURAS WOULD BE SHORT.

4. COMMENT: IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT MERUELO'S ABSENCE FROM THE STAFF OF LA PRENSA AND LA NOTICIA WILL DO ANYTHING BUT REINFORCE THEIR CONSERVATIVE, ANTI-GOVERNMENT AND ANTI-COMMUNIST EDITORIAL STANCE. THE INCIDENT WILL SERVE TO PROVIDE MORE ARGUMENTS THAT THE LOPEZ REGIME IS HOSTILE TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND IS CONTROLLED BY INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE SYMPATHETIC TO "SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM." THE EXPULSION OF MERUELO ALSO DEMONSTRATES THAT EVEN THE LOPEZ GOVERNMENT CAN BE BROUGHT TO ACTION IF THE PUBLIC OUTCRY IS PERSISTENT AND COMES FROM THE PROPER SOCIAL AND POLITICAL FORCES.
SOWASH

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